DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 291 468 PS 017 115

AUTHOR	Hubbell, Ruth; And Others
TITLE	The Transition of Head Start Children into Public School. Final Report: Volume I.
INSTITUTION	CSR, Inc., Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (DHHS), Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO	BOA-105-86-8123
PUB DATE	Nov 87
NOTE	115p.; For Volume II ("Formative Evaluation of 15 Head Start to Public School Transition Grantees") and Executive Summary, see PS 017 116 and PS 017 117.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Involvement; Comparative Analysis; *Compensatory Education; *Day Care; Demonstration Programs; Early Childhood Education; Elementary Education; *Elementary Schools; Grants; Program Development; Program Effectiveness; *Staff Role; Surveys; *Transitional Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Project Head Start

ABSTRACT

Because the transition of Head Start children into elementary school can be a stressful time for children and parents, Head Start implemented a national transition initiative. This study examined the transition efforts of a responding sample of 108 Head Start programs (out of a stratified random sample of 144) and 15 additional Head Start programs that received special transition grants in 1986. This volume, the first of two, presents survey findings and a comparison of programs and transition grantees. Respondents included, for each program, the Head Start director, the principal of a randomly selected correspondent elementary school, a kindergarten teacher in that school, and parents of two children in that teacher's class who had formerly attended Head Start. In addition, for grantee programs, personnel surveyed included Head Start component coordinators, a Head Start teacher, and, for each program, a school district official. Project proposals were used to develop descriptions of each transition program. Findings indicated that Head Start programs with transition grants were more likely to conduct transition activities with schools than were programs without grants. Furthermore, grantees were more likely to transfer records and to involve school teachers and principals in transition activities. Grantee school teachers were more likely to talk with parents. Parents involved in grantee and other surveyed programs were very similar in their participation in transition activities and concerns. Effective transition methods and the barriers to transition are described. Forty-seven tables are provided. (RH)

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FINAL REPORT

THE TRANSITION OF HEAD START CHILDREN INTO PUBLIC SCHOOL

Volume I

November, 1987

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BOA No. 105-86-8123, Task Order B

PS 017115

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Acknowledgements

The authors of this report expresss our sincere appreciation to the Head Start programs, principals, teachers and parents who participated in the survey at a very busy time of year. We also thank the Transition Grantees, especially those we visited in person, for their participation. We appreciate the involvement of our Project Officer, Dr. Bernard Brown, whose advice and committment to the study greatly enhanced its quality.

We also extend our appreciation to three members of the CSR Chicago office, Bruce Bradley and Kay Miclot who conducted one of the site visits, and Vanessa Rich who critiqued the questionnaires. Diane Tate did an excellent job of managing the survey and field study follow-up and the data coding. We also appreciate the hard work of our research assistants Laura Simonds, Andrew Solomon and David Clem. The word processors Debbie Willingham and Linda Williams provided excellent assistance with the numerous questionnaires and report drafts. We also appreciate the help of our xerox operator Gregory Barbour.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The transition of Head Start children into elementary school can be a stressful time for the children and their parents. Therefore, Head Start has implemented a national transition initiative in an effort to effect a smooth transition and provide continuity in educational experiences for young children and their families. All Head Start programs have been encouraged to initiate transition activities and a number of programs received special grants in 1986 and 1987 to demonstrate innovative approaches to transition to elementary school.

This study examined the transition efforts of a random sample of Head Start programs and of fifteen 1986 recipients of special transition grants. Volume I of this report contains the survey findings and the comparison between the surveyed programs and the transition grantees. Volume II reports on the efforts of the transition grantees.

Survey of Head Start Programs

A stratified random sample of 144 Head Start programs was selected from all Head Start grantees. The sample was stratified by auspice (school/non-school operated) and program model (home-based, center-based). For each program, the following respondents were selected: Head Start director, principal of a randomly selected correspondent elementary school, kindergarten teacher in that school, parents of two children in that teacher's class who had formerly attended Head Start.

All respondents completed self-administered questionnaires about their involvement in the transition process. In all, 82 principals, 108 Head Start directors, 80 teachers and 185 parents responded to the survey.

Transition Grantee Formative Evaluation

The fifteen transition grantees were also surveyed, five through site visits, and ten by mail. In addition to the Head Start director, school principal, school teacher and parents, data were obtained from Head Start component coordinators, a Head Start teacher, and a school district official for each program. Project proposals were also used to develop descriptions of each transition program.

Findings

Transition Activities Conducted by Head Start Programs

- 70% of the Head Start programs surveyed implemented a variety of transition activities. They provided information about Head Start to the schools, participated in joint planning, met with the school superintendent and provided names of children about to enter the schools. Transition grantees were more likely to conduct these activities than were surveyed programs.

- Most Head Start programs provided information about school to parents, and about 50% arranged for visits to the schools or meetings with the kindergarten teacher. The transition grantees conducted more of these types of activities than did other programs surveyed.

- Head Start programs reported and parents confirmed that they implemented such transition activities as conducting meetings about school, offering parents consent forms to sign for transfer of records, providing information on helping children prepare for school and with ways to help their children and themselves deal with the school. Although

most directors said they provided parents with lists of books to read to their children about school, only a third of the parents reported that they received such lists. Transition grantees were more likely to provide these activities than other programs surveyed.

- Generally parents rated Head Start programs highly on preparing them for transition, but some wanted more information, more academic preparation of their children and more visits to the schools.

Transfer of Records

- There was little agreement between Head Start directors' reports of sending child records to the schools and principals' reports of receiving the records. Records were passed on to teachers in less than half of the cases.

- Head Start programs were most likely to transfer records for children with diagnosed handicaps and health records for all children. Less than half transferred developmental or social services records for most or all children.

Transition Activities Conducted By the Schools and Their Effects on Children

- Higher levels of teacher participation in transition activities were related to higher teacher estimates of the preparedness of Head Start children compared to their low-income peers.

- Higher levels of teacher participation in transition activities were related to lower child stress during the first month of school as reported by parents.

- Principals reported that they provided a variety of information on school procedures and schedules to parents at the beginning of school.

- In the majority of the schools someone had met with some or most of the parents of Head Start children about their children during the first month of school.

- High levels of participation in transition activities by principals and teachers related positively to greater involvement with parents.

- Parents were fairly active in visiting their children's new schools and talking with their teachers, although they seldom participated in PTA meetings. When parents participated in more transition activities, school teachers rated their children higher on preparedness for school. Also parents who participated in more activities rated Head Start higher in preparing them for transition.

- Head Start programs operated by school systems were more likely to have written agreements, and to transfer child names and some records to the

schools. They were also more likely to involve staff in record transfer preparation.

Staff Concerns

- Head Start and school staffs noted the lack of written transition agreements as problematic.

- Head Start directors, especially the grantee directors expressed considerable concern about the discontinuity in educational approach between Head Start and the schools. The disparity between Head Start's developmental, child-oriented approach and the schools' teacher-directed, structured approach were viewed as very detrimental to the children.

- Both Head Start and school staff were concerned that children were not academically prepared for school.

- Staff in Head Start programs expressed concerns that the schools would not encourage parents to participate in school activities while school personnel and some Head Start directors were concerned that parents lacked the skills to deal with the school system.

Head Start Children

- In virtually all of the surveyed programs, staff talked with the children about how school would differ from Head Start, but only 60% of the programs arranged for the children to visit the school. However, all of the transition grantees arranged for such visits.

- Ninety-two percent of the surveyed teachers rated Head Start children equally or better prepared for school than their low income classmates on six behaviors. Teachers perceived Head Start children as adjusting to school the same or better than their peers.

- Parents reported few behavioral symptoms of stress in their children during the first month of school. However, parents reported high levels of self-confidence, liking of school and happiness during Head Start. These levels dropped, especially for self-confidence and especially for the children rated the highest during the first month of school, but rebounded the following spring. Children in the transition grant programs showed the greatest resilience.

Transition Methods That Worked

The following activities are ones that were found to be particularly successful in promoting effective transition.

- Written transition agreements between Head Start programs and schools delineated roles and responsibilities for each organization and made commitments to transition explicit.

- Directives from top level school officials set a positive tone and commitment for transition throughout the system.

- Cordial personal relationships between Head Start programs and schools (or being part of the same school system) facilitated transition.

- Exchange meetings between Head Start and kindergarten teachers were effective in clarifying Head Start's goals and program and in informing Head Start teachers of academic and behavioral expectations for kindergarten children.

- Transfer of child names and records to the school alerted the school to the enrollment of Head Start children and enabled the school to begin or continue needed services when the children entered. Records were most effectively used when they reached the teacher.

- Transition programs that functioned throughout the Head Start year - training parents, preparing children, working with school staff, implementing a variety of activities - were more successful than one-shot efforts at the end of the year.

- Programs that provided a supportive network to former Head Start parents whose children were in school were valuable. A parent-to-parent buddy system or staff support helped parents feel secure in the new school environment.

- Training for parents in ways to deal with the school system, what to expect, and how to be assertive in obtaining services for their children (especially children with diagnosed handicaps) were helpful to parents. Both general topics and concrete information and activities were successful. Informing parents of records needed for registration and of dates of registration as well as providing transportation to registration were helpful in enrolling children in a timely fashion. Special meetings and registration for Head Start parents conducted by schools were successful.

- Visits by kindergarten teachers or older children to the Head Start Center provided information to the children and dispelled their fears about school.

- Visits of Head Start children to the kindergarten were a very positive part of the transition process for the children. Visits were most successful when kindergarten teachers were enthusiastic about the visits, prepared activities for the children and welcomed them warmly to the school.

- Summer book lists and activities calendars helped parents ease their children's transition to school as well as maintain readiness skills that might otherwise have declined over the summer.

- Conducting many transition activities produced more awareness and involvement of the school with the Head Start families. When school teachers participated in more transition activities, children had fewer problems adjusting to school.

- Head Start staff were effective advocates for their former children, especially children with diagnosed handicaps, when parents sought their help in obtaining services or reversing school decisions. Head Start staff also assisted school personnel in working with parents whose unrealistic expectations were not beneficial to the child.

Barriers to Transition

The following were identified as barriers to effective transition:

- The different educational approaches of Head Start and the elementary schools created adjustment problems for children. The child-oriented developmental approach of Head Start contrasted sharply to the structured, academic approach of the schools.

- The failure to transfer records for all Head Start children to the schools and the failure of principals to pass such records on to teachers diminished their potential value in serving the children.

- The inability of some parents to deal successfully with the schools was detrimental to successful transition.

- The inability of some Head Start children to meet the academic demands of the school, even though they were considered better prepared than their low income peers - was a concern to Head Start and school staff alike.

- Hostile, competitive or patronizing attitudes of Head Start or school staff toward each other were detrimental to the establishment of successful transition efforts.

Introduction

Head Start's comprehensive approach to developmental services includes preparing children to be successful in elementary school. Leaving Head Start and entering elementary school is likely to be stressful to both child and family as different sets of skills are required to cope with the new environment. A great deal of work must be done by Head Start to prepare children to do the work required by the school and to accept new classmates, a new teacher, and new demands. Organized and planned transition procedures are essential to make sure that children and parents respond positively and progress in the new program.

"Transition" has been defined as the strategies and procedures that are planned and employed to ensure the effective placement and subsequent adjustment of the child as he/she moves from one program into another, for example, from a Head Start program into a kindergarten. This includes increasing school readiness proficiencies of Head Start children, increasing formal coordination between Head Start and the elementary schools, increasing the involvement of parents in the transition and accessing services for handicapped children after they enter public school. The transition process includes the child and family, Head Start and the school system. The activity is goal directed to achieve a satisfactory preparation for the child and family that enables the child to use his or her skills, abilities and motivation for continued cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.

Head Start set improvement of the transition process between Head Start and elementary school as a goal and undertook a variety of efforts to achieve it.

The impetus for the transition initiative came from ACYF Commissioner Dodie Livingston's desire to respond to key findings of the Head Start Synthesis Project which showed children achieving dramatic cognitive and socioemotional success in Head Start which declined once they entered school. The disparity between the Head Start and elementary school approaches to early childhood education and parental involvement was seen as a major deterrent to the continued accelerated progress made by the children once they entered school.

All Head Start programs received a directive to make efforts to enhance transition. In addition, in 1986, 15 Head Start programs were selected as grantees to demonstrate a variety of approaches to improve transition.

This study was designed to obtain information on the transition activities of a random sample of Head Start programs via a mail survey and to assess the efforts of the 15 transition grantees through a formative and summative evaluation.

This volume contains the report on the survey of 144 Head Start programs and compares their efforts to those of the 15 transition grantees. Volume II presents the formative evaluation of the transition grantees and descriptions of their programs.

Both volumes provide information about the transition programs, about barriers to transition and successful transition efforts, and about the concerns of Head Start staff, families and elementary school staff in regard to this issue.

Methodology

Sample

A stratified random sample of 144 Head Start programs was selected for study. Programs were stratified by auspices (school/non-school operated) and program model (home-based, center-based). School operated programs were over-sampled to ensure the selection of 36 programs.

Head Start programs operate as center-based, home-based or combination programs. Because the home-based programs may encounter special challenges in promoting transition because their families are dispersed, the sample was designed to include an adequate number of these programs for analysis. The sample was stratified so that 12 of the purely home-based model were selected. Further, to ensure that the center-based programs were sufficiently "center-based" to provide a valid contrast, all programs in which less than 20% of the children were in center-based programs were eliminated from the sample after the home-based programs were selected. Thus the sample was comprised of 12 home-based programs and 132 center-based programs. Thirty-six of the home- or center-based programs were school operated.

For each Head Start program selected, the following respondents were selected:

- Head Start Director
- Elementary School Principal
- Elementary School Teacher
- Former Head Start Parent (2 per program)

The principal, teacher, and parent were selected randomly from all schools in the Head Start program's service area in which at least ten graduates of the

Head Start program under study and who were in their first year of elementary school (kindergarten or first grade) were enrolled.

A pretest of the questionnaires and survey method was conducted in April, 1987. Due to OMB review delays, the survey was not distributed until early May when programs were beginning to close for the summer. As a result the response rate was lower than had been hoped as seen in Table 1.

Characteristics Of The Head Start Programs

Of the 108 Head Start programs responding to the survey, 78% were grantees and 22% were delegates. Programs were distributed across the 10 Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regions. Fifty-seven percent were center-based, 31% were home- and center-based, 9% were home-based only, and three percent categorized themselves as other models. The largest group (37%) were operated by community action agencies, followed by schools (25%), nonprofit organizations (24%), government agencies (9%), and Indian tribes (5%).

The 1985-86 enrollment ranged from 15 to 5,652 per program with a median of 165 children. The number of these children to enter elementary school the following fall ranged from 9 to 4,804 with a median of 117. The number of schools which children from any one Head Start program could enter ranged from 1 to schools with a median of 14. Slightly over 90% of the Head Start children were to enter kindergarten, with 4.6% entering first grade and 4.6% to enter schools in which the first year of school could be either kindergarten or first grade.

Table 1

Survey Response Rates By
Respondent Type

	No. Surveyed	No. Returns	Return Rate
Directors	144	108	75%
Principals	144	82	57%
Teachers	144	80	56%
Parents	288	185	64%
Total	720	455	63%

Findings

Directors' Reports on Transition

Transition Activities Conducted By Head Start Programs

The Head Start Directors provided the primary source of information on the activities and concerns of the Head Start program and staff.

The majority of the Head Start programs surveyed had conducted some transition activities. (See Table 2) Seventy-six percent (76%) had provided the elementary school with information about the purpose of Head Start, classroom methods or ways that children were prepared for school. Seventy-four percent (74%) had participated in joint planning with school staff about transition procedures or transfer of records of individual children. Seventy percent (70%) had provided the schools with the names of the Head Start children who would be entering elementary school. Sixty percent (60%) had met with the school superintendent, assistant superintendent or someone from his/her office. However, the most formal activity of all, developing a written agreement with the elementary school district regarding transition was undertaken by only 14 or 13% of the programs.

Transfer of Records

Head Start programs are required to transfer health records to the schools with parental consent, and may transfer other types of records which would provide the school and teacher with information which could assist in easing the child's transition to school, assuring proper placement and the identification of special needs or services.

Table 2

Directors' Reports of
Transition Activities Conducted By
Head Start Programs
N = 108

Activity	Activity Conducted	
	Yes	No
	%	%
Provided the elementary school with information about the purpose of Head Start, classroom methods, or ways that children were prepared for school.	76	24
Participated in joint planning with school staff about transition procedures or transfer of records of individual children.	74	26
Names of Head Start children who would be entering elementary school.	70	30
Met with the school superintendent, assistant superintendent or some one from his/her office.	60	40
Developed a written agreement with the elementary school district or a specific school.	13	87

Table 3

Directors' Reports on
Number of Programs Providing
Records to Schools By
Percentage of Children For
Which Item Is Provided
(N = 108)

Type of Information	Number of Programs Providing Items by Percentage of Children for Whom They are Provided			
	All 100% %	Most 50-90% %	Some 1-49% %	None %
Results of developmental[1] screenings	31	9	39	22
Results of speech, vision or hearing tests	52	10	31	7
Results of developmental tests	31	7	40	22
Social services records[1]	14	7	22	58
Individual Education Plans for Handicapped Children	63	7	14	16
Certification of the handicapping condition	63	10	12	15

[1]Fewer than 100% of directors responded

As Table 3 shows, programs were most likely to transfer records on handicapped children including Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) and certification of handicapping conditions. Records on speech, hearing, and vision tests were the most likely to be transferred for all children (52%) and more likely to be transferred than any other type of record for at least some of the children.

Developmental screenings and tests were less likely to be transferred with only 31% of the programs transferring them for all children and 22% not transferring them for any children. Social services records were the least likely to be transferred with 58% of the programs not transferring these records for any children, possibly reflecting the sensitive nature of such records.

Directors' Reports on Staff Involvement In Transition

Even though not all programs transferred records, 84% of the directors reported that they involved program coordinators and teachers in transition by informing them about procedures for transferring records to the elementary school, meetings with school personnel or plans for children or parents to visit the school. Eighty-six percent of the directors reported that Head Start teachers received guidance or training on activities to help prepare children for elementary school.

Head Start directors reported on the concerns which their staffs had about the transition of children and families into elementary school. Eighty-one percent of the directors reported staff concerns that school staff might not encourage parents to become involved in school activities or decision-making groups. Seventy-three percent (73%) of the directors reported staff concerns about the children's readiness for the academic demands of school. Seventy

Table 4

Directors' Reports of
Staff Concerns About Transition
of Children Into School
(N = 108)

Type of Concern	Number of Directors Expressing Concern: Staff Concerned %	Staff Not Concerned %
School staff might not encourage parents to become involved in school activities or decision-making groups	81	19
Children might not be ready for academic demands of school	73	27
School staff might not work with Head Start parents in helping children adjust to school	70	30
Information on individual children might not be used appropriately by the schools	48	52
Head Start staff would have difficulty working with school staff	40	60
School teachers will not speak the primary language of the children or parents	35	65

percent (70%) expressed staff concerns that school staff might not work with Head Start parents in helping children adjust to school. Less than half of the directors stated concerns that information on individual children might not be used appropriately by the schools or that school teachers would not speak the primary language of the children or parents.

These concerns reflect the discontinuity that is often perceived between Head Start programs and schools in which children move from a child-oriented, learning through play environment to a more structured, formal academic setting, and in which parents move from a supportive environment in which they have the opportunity to be decisionmakers and program participants to one in which they are largely excluded from the education of their children.

Activities For Parents

Head Start programs reported a number of activities that they undertook to assist parents in the transition to school by familiarizing them with the school, its staff and its procedures.

Virtually all programs surveyed (90%) reported that they provided parents with information on how they can help their children practice skills needed for elementary school. Most (86%) provided parents with suggestions for summer activities for children or a list of books the parents could read to their child. Most programs (78%) reported that they helped Head Start parents understand what to look for and what to do about their child's feelings and reactions to being in elementary school. Most (72%) also said they provided parents with information on how to deal with the school their child was entering. Thus parent education activities that fit naturally into a Head Start program's parent involvement component were widely implemented by the

Table 5

Directors' Reports of
Transition
Activities For Parents
(N = 108)

Type of Activity	Activity Provided	
	Yes	No
	%	%
Information on how parents can help their children practice skills needed for elementary school	90	10
Suggestions for summer activities or a list of books parents can read to their children	86	14
Helping Head Start parents understand what to look for and what to do about their child's feelings and reactions to being in elementary school	78	22
Provided parents with information for parents on how to deal with the school their child will be entering	72	28
Arrange for parents to visit the new school	54	46
Arranged for parents to meet their child's new teacher	46	54

Head Start programs surveyed. However, activities outside of parent meetings such as arranging for parents to visit the new school and meet their child's new teacher were undertaken by fewer programs. Only 54% arranged for visits and 46% arranged for parents to meet their child's teacher. One of the reasons for the latter low percentage may be that in many school districts children are not assigned to a specific teacher until the fall so it was not possible for parents to meet the teacher until then.

Activities For Children

The directors were asked about their efforts to prepare children for transition in three areas: talking with the children about how school will differ from Head Start, arranging for the children to visit the new school, and arranging for them to meet their new teacher. Virtually all of the programs (90%) talked with children about Head Start/school differences, while only 60% arranged for the children to visit the school, and 43% arranged for them to meet their new teacher.

Problems In Transition

Directors were asked about the three biggest problems they encountered in transition. Responses varied widely but there were a number of key problems noted by large numbers of directors.

Table 7 shows the problems ranked as the first, second, or third biggest problem.

Directors found the large number of elementary schools involved in transition to be the greatest problem, making their jobs of joint planning and transfer of records more difficult. Parental issues were ranked next. Directors

Table 6

Directors' Reports of
Activities To
Prepare Children For
Transition
(N = 108)

Type of Activity	Program Activity	
	Yes	No
	%	%
Head Start staff talked with children about ways elementary school will differ from Head Start	90	10
Head Start arranged for children to:		
visit school	60	40
meet new teacher	43	57

Table 7

Problems
Directors Reported
in Transition[1]
(N = 87)

Problem	No. of Programs Ranking Problem 1st, 2nd or 3rd	
	N	%
Too many different elementary schools are involved	50	57
Parents lack skills for dealing with the elementary school personnel or environment or fear distrust or do not feel welcome in schools	48	55
There is no written agreement with the school system	34	39
There is little cooperation from the school board or school staff	29	33
Too many children are involved	18	21
Lack of trust between Head Start and the school system	16	18
Children lack skills for dealing with the elementary school personnel or environment	10	11
School programs are inappropriately academic	7	8
Schools don't use information that is sent	6	7
Schools want information Head Start does not have	1	1

[1]Each director could report three problems

identified as problems parents lacking the skills to deal with the school and school personnel and fearing, distrusting or not feeling welcome in the schools. Examples of comments were "There is no parent involvement in the public school, parents often feel unwelcome and inadequate," "There is a basic lack of trust between the parents and the school" and "There is a lack of staff time in the public schools for parent communication."

Thirty-four directors ranked the lack of a written agreement with the schools regarding transition as the first, second or third biggest problem. Twenty-nine directors noted that there is little cooperation from the school board or school staff. The fact that too many children are involved in transition came next with eighteen directors mentioning it. The lack of trust between Head Start and the school system was noted by sixteen directors as one of the top three problems.

Children lacking the skills needed for dealing with the elementary school personnel or environment was a problem identified by ten directors. Seven directors felt that school programs were inappropriately academic and six felt that the schools did not use the information that Head Start sent. Only one director noted that schools wanted information that Head Start did not have, possibly reflecting the situation that few schools request records or other information.

Critical Incidents

Effective Transitition Incidents

Directors were also asked to describe "critical incidents" or situations in which transition efforts were effective and ones in which efforts encountered barriers. The type of situation most frequently described (by 30

directors) in which efforts were effective were those in which effective communication between Head Start and the schools was promoted and/or meetings were held between Head Start and school staff or parents. The following are examples of such situations.

> "Head Start officials conferred with principals in each county requesting to have one kindergarten teacher serve on the Head Start education committee."

> "Each spring the school principals, school psychologist, school social worker and special education directors from the receiving schools meet with the Head Start central staff to discuss the needs of the children who will be attending their kindergarten program in the fall."

> "The Local Education Agency's preschool team is housed on site at the Head Start Center. The preschool team meets with Head Start teachers, parents and administrative staff in an effort to provide appropriate placement (for children)."

> "At one of the elementary schools we invited the two kindergarten teachers to come out and observe our Head Start classroom and give us a critique on what they did and did not like. We thought they might come out for an hour or two. Instead they came during their spring break and spent the entire day in the classroom basically volunteering as teacher aides. They gave many compliments and also many suggestions for improvement. The most important thing that came out of this was the mutual respect which the Head Start and kindergarten teachers developed for each other."

Nineteen directors described situations in which a particular handicapped child was helped through the transition process. In these cases, Head Start staff and school staff worked together to ensure a successful transition. Some examples follow:

> "A child with visual impairment functioned very well in the Head Start classroom, but the school system resisted mainstreaming the child. We got them to observe the child in our classroom. They then agreed to place the child in a regular kindergarten classroom. One for our side!"

> "One of our children was severely physically handicapped and non-verbal. The parents wanted their child in Head Start in order for the child to see how non-handicapped children interacted in a group setting. They were sure that when she became school aged that she would become institutionalized. Through case conferences between Head Start, the public school and the parent, the child is now attending a physically

handicapped classroom and is doing extremely well. The parents are now taking each year point by point to help determine the best placement for their child."

Ten directors related incidents in which individual non-handicapped children were helped in transition. Examples of these situations include the following:

"A former Head Start child was a discipline problem to the kindergarten teacher. Records had previously been transferred to the public school system but they never reached the teacher. The child has a long history of abuse. The kindergarten teacher was inappropiately reprimanding the child for his behavior. The Head Start teacher requested a meeting with the public school personnel to follow up on the child. Through this conference the entire approach and environment was changed for the child."

"We had a primarily Spanish-speaking child entering the kindergarten program with limited English skills. We sent a letter to the principal of the elementary school requesting that the child be placed in the classroom with a Spanish-speaking teacher. Additionally, the Head Start teacher accompanied the parent to kindergarten registration.

Head Start contacted the Director of the Language Development Lab in another school district. The Language Development Specialist came to the Head Start classroom to assess the child, and he made the recommendation that the child be placed in a Kindergarten program in his district. The Language Development Specialist will be working with the child's mother in placing the child in the appropriate program."

"This was an actual situation that happened to one of our families. We had a child with a late birthday who was considered too immature for kindergarten. When Head Start staff went to the school to intervene on behalf of the child and family, the child was allowed to remain in kindergarten with an aide that was provided by the elementary school."

"A former Head Start child was placed in a bilingual classroom and bussed to a new school. The parent called and told the child's former Head Start teacher that she did not want her child bussed from the local school or in a bilingual classroom. The Head Start teacher, who speaks Spanish, agreed with the parent and became an advocate for the child and parent. The district decided to place the child in a regular kindergarten for one month. If the child had problems, she would be returned to a bilingual classroom. The child stayed in a regular classroom and did very well."

Five directors described effective transition efforts in which activities were held to help the children adjust to school. For example,

> "The Head Start center teacher arranged to spend a week in class discussing what to expect when the children went to the elementary school, and then arranged to visit one kindergarten class. Because these children attend three different schools, it was not possible to take the children to their specific school, but they at least got to see a kindergarten classroom. We have had several good comments about this part of the program."

> "The home visitor, parent and child went to the elementary school to meet the teacher and see the room the child would attend. The child was allowed to familiarize himself with the room—toys, books--and get acquainted with the teacher during the 15 minute period. This visit was one of the last home visits of the year and had been pre-arranged with the teacher. We feel it is very important to give the child a positive and pleasant experience with his new environment for the fall kindergarten program."

Three directors described incidents in which records were sent from the Head Start to the school, facilitating transition. For example,

> "In April we sent a roster to the four elementary schools of the Head Starters living in their boundaries. Each school sent us their kindergarten roundup flyers. We gave these to our parents along with verbal encouragement to register for kindergarten in person on that day. Several parents requested copies of their children's education files which contained copies of the Carolina Developmental Profile completed for each child. These copies were given to the appropriate kindergarten staff."

Two or fewer directors reported incidents in which the Head Start worked with a special school unit to promote transition, disputes over child eligibility to enter school because of entry dates were resolved, an institutional change was facilitated such as the signing of a written transition agreement or the director reported that Head Start's position as part of the school system facilitated transition.

Barriers to Transition

Directors were also asked to describe incidents in which they encountered barriers to effective transition. The situation most frequently described was

Table 8

Directors' Critical Incidents
That Were Effective in Promoting Transition
(N = 80)

Incident	No. of Directors Reporting
Effective communication was promoted between Head Start, the school, and parents, including parent and staff meetings.	30
A specific handicapped child was assisted in transition.	20
A specific non-handicapped child was assisted in transition.	9
Activities were held to help children adjust to or learn about school.	5
Records/information was sent to the school regarding the individual children.	3
Head Start works with a special school unit to enhance transition.	2
Institutional changes were made.	2
Head Start is part of the school.	2
A problem with the school entry cutoff date was overcome.	2
Other	5

one in which school programs for handicapped children were inadequate (26 directors). Some examples of this included the following:

> "The Board of Education System makes it impossible to have good transitions. The handicapped effort faces much resistance, lack of cooperation, inability to look at outside evaluations, or deal with parents and their rights."
>
> "Rural communities have inherent problems in their lack of existing special education services for handicapped and high risk children. One of our counties co-ops with a larger and distant metropolitan school for special services. The rural school is a "step-child" which places the Head Start child very low on their priority list. Testing and case conferences had to be doggedly advocated for. If you are unaware of the law they will take advantage of your ignorance and continue to postpone follow-up. There seems to be a lack of appreciation for early intervention if it interferes with deadlines."
>
> "Children have to travel a long distance to special needs classrooms. Local school districts do not serve all special needs children in their home school. Parents have genuine concern about length of bus run and some refuse to place their children in special class. This is the only real barrier faced by the program and happens each year."

The lack of cooperation and respect for Head Start from the school system were of particular chagrin to the surveyed directors.

> "At a recent staff meeting involving Head Start staff and staff from one of the elementary schools one of the kindergarten teachers said "My major complaint about Head Start kids is that they don't know how to sit still. You guys must let they run wild." When we asked her to explain what she meant it became apparent that she expects her kindergarten children to sit at little desks for part of the day. We explained our curriculum and that there was definite classroom control but that we did not think her expectation of sitting in the desk was age appropriate. She became very defensive and refused to discuss the matter further. She seemed to judge all Head Start children based on a few behavior management problems that she had in the past.
>
> She also questioned in a very haughty manner the qualifications of the Head Start teachers. She was shocked at the large percentage of our teachers who have college degrees. She seemed not to believe us. We have asked her to visit the centers on several occasions but she could not find the time. The other school teachers at the staff meeting made faces like they did not agree with her but no one contradicted her."
>
> "We have been working in one school district for the past 17 years. The curriculum is highly academic and the public school staff has expressed

Table 9

Directors'
Critical Incidents In Which Barriers
to Transition were Encountered
(N = 70)

Incident	No. of Directors Reporting
School programs for handicapped children were inadequate	26
Lack of cooperation and respect for Head Start from the school system	17
School entry cut-off dates caused problems	6
Parental decisions caused problems	6
School programs were inadequate for non-handicapped children	5
Schools showed a lack of respect for parents	3
Other	7

very stereotypical attitudes about Head Start children and families. One home visitor was intervening on behalf of a very developmentally advanced Head Start child. The school felt this child should not enter kindergarten due to her family background. When the parent and staff member said the child had been in Head Start for two years and was quite bright, the school staff replies that "All they do in Head Start is eat!""

"In some school districts, several kindergarten teachers complain that they receive Head Start childrens' folders two-three months after school begins. The Head Start program hand delivers childrens' folders to each public school during the month of June, where Head Start children will be attending. The information provided on each child gives the teacher a good assessment of these childrens' skills. If the teachers were to receive the childrens' folders prior to a child's enrollment in their classroom, they would be aware of preschool experiences the child has had and would be able to help the child adjust to the new environment. They would also be able to compare the child's strengths and weaknesses. It appears that school personnel are not getting folders to the teachers early enough for them to utilize the information Head Start has provided."

School entry cut-off dates have caused problems for several Head Start programs, as the following incidents relate.

"One barrier we have faced with some of our Head Start families is when a child with a late birthday is judged by the elementary school to be too immature for kindergarten. The child is forced to remain at home for another year. Teachers and/or administrative staff in most schools are not willing to accomodate any special needs children in kindergarten who are not handicapped.

"Procedures for the transition of Head Start four year olds to the public school kindergarten classroom are taking place for the second year in our program. There are conflicting opinions concerning the advantages of five year old enrollment when there are indications of non-readiness (the male population in particular). The cut-off date for kindergarten eligibility is September 1 in most of our unified school districts, therefore, there are some very young five year olds which are eligible for kindergarten entry. It should also be noted that kindergarten is not mandatory in our state.

Two specific cases occurred in 1985-86 in which the male children met the kindergarten screening criteria, but poor attention span and deficits in some motor activities were observed. In both cases the families were advised to keep the children home for another year, with the assumption that one or more year of development would counter the developmental lags. Therefore, the children did remain at home. Consequently, one family was able to provide limited pre-school experience the next year while the other family was not able to provide this experience for their child.

Some children are susceptible to developmental lags while others may be learning disabled or slow learners. Current practices in the field of special education do not adequately identify these two populations of students at four and five years of age. The gaps between readiness and school entry criteria are not always beneficial to these children."

Inappropriate parental decisions about placement can also hamper the transition of a child. This is a particularly difficult issue. Head Start programs usually recognize parents' rights to make these decisions even though they may not agree with them. Six directors described such incidents.

"At the final staffing of the Head Start year, Head Start staff and the Child Find Coordinator from the school system recommended that this little girl not go into public kindergarten. Because of the child's delayed social skills and very late August birthday, it was recommended that she return to Head Start instead of kindergarten. Her mother was aware of all information but decided against the team recommendation and placed her in kindergarten. The child was removed from the kindergarten a month into school. (Kindergarten is not mandatory in our state.) At this time, her mother tried to place her in Head Start but we had no openings. The child, therefore, did not receive services last school year."

"One child was not ready for the kindergarten curriculum. Several staff members spoke to parents and school personnel about our concerns. Head Start wanted to keep the child, the school district was in agreement, but the parents refused. The child is not doing well and the parents are placing blame on Head Start. This is very frustrating to all. We also realize it is the parents' right to choose the best placement for their child."

"One school district only has a classroom to help ten children who can use something similar to a young five's program. In spite of documenting the need for more openings they do not plan to provide them. They are telling the parent to keep the children home or send them back to Head Start putting us in an awkward situation."

"There seems to be a push in the district to place many Spanish speaking children in a bilingual classroom unnecessarily."

Three directors described situations in which the schools showed a lack of respect for parents or did not allow them to be meaningfully involved in school activities as the following examples demonstrate.

"One of the barriers in placing Head Start children into the regular kindergarten classroom is the difference in teacher attitude between Head

Start and the schools (even though Head Start is part of the school system).

Head Start teachers welcome parents in the classroom and it appears that in most of the cases kindergarten teachers view parents as an extra burden.

The specific case involved a Head Start parent and a kindergarten teacher. The parent wanted to help in the classroom, as she had done many times in Head Start. The kindergarten teacher informed the parents both verbally and nonverbally that she did not want any parents helping in her classroom.

The kindergarten teacher said the parent could work as room mother of help prepare materials outside the classroom, but she did not want extra adults in the room."

The remaining directors described other types of incidents in which the child's problems created a difficult transition or there were institutional problems such as school system consolidation that made transition difficult.

Summary

The Head Start directors sampled reported that a high percentage of their programs conducted a variety of transition activities with local elementary schools. Over two-thirds of the programs provided information about Head Start to the schools, participated in joint planning, and provided names of entering children to the schools. The majority of directors met with the school superintendent, but very few had written transition agreements with the schools.

Directors reported that most of the Head Start programs transfer child records for at least some children, but except for handicapped children's IEP's, most programs did not transfer records for all children.

Over two-thirds of the directors reported staff concerns that parents would not be encouraged to participate in school activities and that children were not academically ready for school.

The great majority of Head Start programs reported providing information to parents and children on transition, but sixty percent or fewer arranged concrete activities such as visits to school or meetings with the new teacher.

Directors found the large number of elementary schools involved, the lack of parent skills to deal with the school and the lack of written agreements to be the greatest problems they encountered. However, in describing critical incidents in which they encountered barriers to transition, directors were most likely to describe situations in which school programs for handicapped children were inadequate, in which there was a lack of respect for Head Start from the school system and in which school entry cut-off dates caused problems.

Examples of effective transitions included situations in which communication was enhanced, and instances in which both a particular handicapped and nonhandicapped children were helped.

Principals' Reports on Transition

For each Head Start program surveyed, one principal was randomly selected from all the schools in the Head Start service area. The principal provided the perspective of school administration on the transition process.

Eight-two principals responded to the survey. Seventy-nine percent of these principals directed schools in which children enter at the kindergarten level. Two administered schools that began with first grade. In one school children entered either kindergarten or first grade. In the fall of 1986, the number of children who entered the first year of these schools ranged from 13 to 360 with a median of 83 children. Of these, the number of children who had attended Head Start ranged from two to 95.

Participation in Transition Activities

Principals described their participation in various transition activities. As Table 10 shows, a slight majority indicated that they had undertaken or participated in most of the activities.

The largest percentage (77%) had provided information to Head Start about the school and 75% had received the names of the Head Start children entering their elementary school. Sixty-five percent had arranged for Head Start children or parents to visit the school and 61% had received information about the purpose of Head Start, its classroom methods or ways that Head Start children were prepared for elementary school. Fifty-six percent arranged for Head Start staff to visit the school, and 52% participated in joint planning with Head Start staff about transition procedures or transfer of records of individual children.

Only 48% of the principals had met with school staff to discuss ways to facilitate the transition, and only 28% had developed a written transition agreement with Head Start.

The average level of participation in the transition activities was 56%.

Responses on these items from the principals were compared to the responses of their respective Head Start directors. Agreement was quite low. The principal and the Head Start director agreed that they had developed a written agreement in only 9% of the cases. Only 48% agreed that they had participated in joint planning. While it is possible that the Head Start may have developed written agreements or conducted joint planning with another elementary school in the area, or that the school may have worked with a different Head Start program than the one surveyed, the low degree of agreement casts doubt on the extent of cooperation between Head Start and the public schools.

Table 10

Principals' Participation
in Transition Activities
(N = 82)

Activity	Yes	No
	%	%
Participated in joint planning with Head Start staff about transition procedures or transfer of records of individual children	52	48
School staff met among themselves to discuss ways to facilitate the transition	48	52
Provided information to Head Start about the school (e.g., contact persons and phone numbers, registration procedures, school calendar)	77	23
Arranged for Head Start staff to visit the school	56	44
Developed written transition agreement with Head Start	28	72
Received information about the purpose of Head Start, its classroom methods, or ways that Head Start children were prepared for elementary school	61	39
Received names of the Head Start children who would be entering elementary school	75	25
Average transition activity level	56	

Record Transfer

Principals were asked about the records they received from Head Start and the uses to which they put these records. As Table 11 shows, medical records were received for all children by the most principals (55%), other medically related records (speech, vision and hearing tests) were received for all children by almost half of the principals (49%). Individual Education Plans and certification of handicapping conditions for all relevant children were received by 43% and 40% of the principals, respectively. Fewer (33%, 32% and 25%) received developmental screenings, developmental test results or social service records on all children. A large percentage of principals received no social service records, development tests and screenings, handicapped certification, IEPs, medical and dental records or speech, vision or hearing tests.

Principals were asked how they used these records: to place the child in a class or group; to obtain evaluations or services for a child; to put in the child's record; or not to use them. As Table 12 shows, the most frequent uses were to put the records in the child's file and to obtain services or evaluations for the child. Medical records were most frequently placed in the child's file (89%). Records for handicapped children, either IEPs or certification of handicapping condition, were also most often used to obtain services or to put in the child's record. They were also frequently used to place the child in a class or group (53% for IEPs and 49% for certification). Developmental screenings and tests were also frequently used for placement (48% and 46%, respectively). Principals rarely said that they did not use records if they received them.

Table 11

Principals' Reports on
Receipt of Child Information
From Head Start

Type of Information	Percentage of Children for Whom Provided: All 100% %	Most 50-99% %	Some 1-49% %	None 0% %
Results of developmental screenings (such as the Denver Developmental Test) N = 73	33	11	11	45
Results of speech, vision or hearing tests N = 75	49	7	17	27
Results of developmental tests (such as the Caldwell Preschool Inventory or Learning Assessment Profile) N = 73	32	10	10	49
Medical and/or dental records N = 75	55	7	4	35
Social services records N = 73	25	11	11	53
(For handicapped children) Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals and objectives N = 77	43	7	14	36
Certification of the handicapping condition N = 77	40	5	13	42

Principals were almost equally divided as to whether or not they gave any feedback to the Head Start program on the helpfulness of the records with 48% saying they did and 52% saying they did not.

School Staff Concerns

Principals were asked if their staff had any of a number of concerns before Head Start children began school. As Table 13 shows, about two-thirds of the principals said their staffs did not have these concerns with the exception of concerns about the Head Start children's readiness for school. In that instance 43% of the school staff were concerned, in contrast to school staff's own ability to work with parents or Head Start staff or speak the children's primary language in which 20% or fewer expressed concerns.

Coordination with Parents

Information can be an important contributor to parents' feeling of ease and familiarity in the transfer to school. Principals were queried about the types of information they provided parents about school requirements and activities. According to Table 14, virtually all schools provided information to parents on school procedures, bus schedules, materials needed by the child, opportunities for parent involvement and ways for parents to help children deal with school problems.

When asked if any special information was given to Head Start parents only, 19% of the principals responded that they did give special information. Special information provided to Head Start parents included parent handbooks or newsletters, school procedures, calendars, discipline policies, progress reports/report cards, and opportunities for parent involvement. They also

Table 12

Principals'
Use of Information
Received from Head Start

Type of Information	Use: To place child in class or group %	To obtain services or evaluations for child %	To put in the child's record %	Did/will not use %
Results of developmental screenings (such as the Denver Developmental Test) (N=40)	48	65	63	5
Results of speech, vision or hearing tests (N=55)	29	73	64	2
Results of developmental tests (such as the Caldwell Preschool Inventory or Learning Assessment Profile) (N=37)	46	54	62	3
Medical and/or dental records (N=49)	19	57	89	2
Social services records (N=34)	15	56	76	9
(For handicapped children) Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals and objectives (N=49)	53	82	61	0
Certification of the handicapping condition (N=45)	49	76	67	0

Table 13

Principals' Assessment of
School Staff Concerns
About Head Start Children
Entering School
(N = 81)

Concern	% of Principals Expressing Concern: Concerned %	Not Concerned %
School staff's ability to work with Head Start parents in helping their children adjust to school	20	80
School staff's ability to speak the primary language of the parents or children	19	82
Head Start children's readiness for the academically oriented demands in elementary school	43	58
School staff's ability to work with Head Start staff	16	84

Table 14

Information Provided
to Parents
By Schools
(N = 82)

Type of Information	Provided %	Not Provided %
School procedures and policies	100	
Bus schedule	90	10
Materials supplied, money needed by child	96	4
Opportunities for parent involvement	98	2
Ways for parents to help children deal with school problems	95	5

included information on the PTA, on the importance of parental interest in academic progress, on supplementary school services, on pre-registration and on home visits for families.

One premise in transition is that parents will feel more welcome in the school, more involved and more informed if school personnel discuss their children with them soon after school begins. Principals were asked how frequently this happens during the first month of school and with what percentage of the parents. (Table 15) Topics for discussion included child's strengths, the child's developmental level, child's needs for screening or evaluation, child's limitations or special needs and ways for parents to make their concerns about their children known to the staff.

In the majority of schools someone had met with some or most of the parents on these topics. In over a quarter of the schools someone had talked to all parents about ways for parents to make their concerns about their children known to the staff.

Principals' Reports on Problems in Transition

Principals were asked to identify the three biggest problems in transition from a prepared list, adding their own if they were not included on the list. Problems with the transition process from Head Start to school can range from the number of children involved to uncooperative parents.

As Table 16 shows, 50% of the principals did not identify either a first, second or third problem. The problem most frequently cited as the first, second or third biggest problem was that parents lack the skills for dealing with elementary school personnel (14%). This was followed by information about individual children being absent or inadequate (10%), no written

Table 15

Number of Principals Reporting Staff Talking with Varying Percentages of Parents About Children During the First Month of School
(N = 77)

Topic	Percentage of Parents with whom School Staff Spoke: All 100% %	Most 50-99% %	Some 1-49% %	None 0% %
Their child's strengths	12	31	39	19
Their child's developmental level	16	29	40	16
Their child's needs for screening/assessment/ evaluation	14	27	42	17
Their child's physical/ mental/emotional limitations or special needs	13	25	46	17
Ways for parents to make their concerns about children known to staff	26	31	27	16
Average Percent of Parents With Whom Staff Spoke	16	28	38	17

agreement with Head Start (8%), children lack skills for dealing with the elementary school environment (8%), too many children are involved (3%), and the schools want information that Head Start does not have (3%).

Two percent noted communication problems and one percent each identified curriculum differences between the schools and Head Start and the lack of time for coordination.

Critical Incidents

As with the directors, principals were asked to describe single incidents in which transition was particularly effective and ones in which barriers to transition were encountered.

As Table 17 shows, incidents were fairly widely disbursed over a number of categories with many principals not answering the question. Only 32 responses were obtained. Most frequently cited successes were activities that helped children adjust to or learn about school.

For example,

> "The same activity can be a negative experience when teachers feeling 'end-of-the-year doldrums' resent visitors and additional numbers (of children). However, when we allowed Head Start visitors, the most positive part of the visit was the opportunity given those little ones to participate in a regular kindergarten "day" and to tour the building and visit with school personnel."
>
> "All Head Start students who will be entering kindergarten in the fall of 1987 have visited the classrooms and were given an orientation to this grade level by our kindergarten staff. Parents were involved also in this orientation."
>
> "In order to ease the transition into elementary school, visits are arranged and students are welcomed into school in the spring before entering in September."
>
> "A kindergarten visit where students came to the kindergarten room and spent an hour with the teacher and other personnel to help the students with transition (become familiar with the school bus, the building, the prospective teacher, etc.)"

Table 16

Problems Identified by Principals as First, Second or Third Biggest Problem By Survey and Grantees
(N = 74)

Problem	No. of Principals Ranking Problem 1st, 2nd or 3rd	
	N	%
No problem listed	105	50
Parents lack skills for dealing with elementary school personnel or environment	29	14
Information about individual children is absent or inadequate	22	10
There is no written agreement with Head Start	17	8
Children lack skills for dealing with the elementary school environment	16	8
Too many children are involved	7	3
Schools want information that Head Start does not have	6	3
There are communication problems between the schools and Head Start	5	2
There are curriculum differences between the two programs	2	1
There is not enough time for coordination	2	1

[1]Each principal could report three problems

Activities involving staff from both the schools and Head Start were described as easing transition by six principals. Some examples of these follow.

"Interstaff meetings--Situations (were) developed and provided for the staff of the elementary school to meet with Head Start staff. Discussion was held in regard to each child--their strengths, weaknesses and needs. It proved very helpful for the elementary staff and ultimately for the children."

"Head Start teachers and kindergarten teachers met to discuss level of proficiency needed for success. All areas of study were discussed and plans were made for pre-K Head Start students to be exposed to areas needed for kindergarten student success."

Four principals noted incidents in which an individual handicapped child was helped in transition as the following examples illustrate.

"A child was in Head Start and referred to the school system for evaulation. His conceptual developmental age was approximately 3 years and 4 months. This child was placed in a kindergarten class in which a lot of emphasis was placed on language experience and a hands-on approach to learning. His mother was very eager to learn ways to help him and stayed in close contact with the kindergarten teacher. He quickly began to make great strides in learning the required material as well as in social adjustment and self-confidence. At the end of the school year, the child was promoted to a regular first grade program."

"A problem Head Start child was identified early. It helped to start evaluation in kindergarten and eventual placement of child in Special Ed."

Two principals provided examples of incidents in which helpful information was provided by Head Start to the school or vice versa.

"We had a meeting with the Head Start director in the spring of 1986 about the children who would be entering kindergarten in the fall. This information was helpful as far as determining what class to put the children in the fall and giving us an idea of the academic progress and any outstanding behavioral traits of each child."

Three principals described the attributes of Head Start children which help them succeed in school.

"They know school routines better than those who did not attend Head Start"

"In general, the Head Start children are much more self reliant and have many skills that children of comparable backgrounds who do not attend Head Start do not have."

Table 17

Principals' Reports of
Incidents in Which
Transition Was Effective
(N = 32)

Incident	Principals Reporting
	%
Activities were held to help children adjust to or learn about school	38
Meetings were held between school staff and Head Start staff to discuss transition	19
A specific handicapped child was helped in transition	13
The school provided information to Head Start and vice versa	6
Head Start children are better prepared for school	9
The school system learned about and cooperated with Head Start/a new transition plan eased transition	6
A school meeting was held for parents	3
Records were sent to the school	3
A non-handicapped child's transition to school was eased	3

Two principals described instances in which school staff learned about and cooperated with Head Start.

> "Our teachers and staff have familiarized themselves with Head Start's curriculum "Un Marco Abierto" and have adapted portions of our own kindergarten curriculum and room arrangement to coincide with Head Start's. We have found that this familiarity helps the children to adjust."

One principal each described incidents in which meetings were held for parents, records were sent to the schools and a non-handicapped child's transition to school was eased. The incident below describes a parent meeting.

> "We had a special orientation meeting just for Head Start parents to address questions they had that might not be addressed at the regular kindergarten meeting. They submitted a list to the Head Start staff. At the suggestion of the Head Start staff, we held this meeting at 10:00 a.m. We were discouraged somewhat because we had only about 25 parents from a program that had 80 plus students."

Principals also described incidents in which barriers were encountered in transition. Again, very few (18) responded. As Table 18 shows, the most frequently noted were incidents in which there were communication problems between the schools and Head Start. Also mentioned five times were situations in which a particular child had problems adjusting to school.

In regard to communication/cooperation problems, the following were described.

> "It has been reported to me that Head Start staff feels bound by the requirements of confidentiality and is not able to share transition data about incoming kindergarten students.
>
> Kindergarten teachers have not, in my view, been helpful to Head Start people by indicating what information they would like to have. Also, they have not gone to parents of Head Start kids with any direct appeal for information."
>
> "We sent letters to Head Start asking for parent volunteers. It was reported to us that there was no response. We need more cooperation from Head Start."
>
> "We have found that we are not informed about special children (emotionally handicapped, etc.) and the previous treatment, IEP's assessments they have had while in Head Start. Consequently, we often feel that we are

starting over and losing time when the child's special programs are not continued."

Five principals described incidents in which a particular child or children had problems adjusting to school, as the following examples illustrate.

"Child was not adequately toilet-trained and as a result returned to the Head Start Program. When he started kindergarten the following year (second time) he was just fine. He was definitely ready and showed signs of maturity."

"The problem of adjusting all day in school. We've had children referred to the social worker for help and parents lack skills to deal with this particular problem. I think that the Head Start Program should make their students aware about adjusting all day in school."

Three principals described problems in which difficulties were encountered in obtaining services from other agencies as this example shows.

"A student in our kindergarten program showed evidence of many physical problems. We contacted Head Start personnel and they were very concerned and reported the same patterns of physical problems. They had referred the child for testing and we had been given copies of the test results. The child was also under the care of Children's Medical Services, but the physical problems persisted. Various agencies were contacted to assist in determining the cause of his problems and possible means of correcting them so he could perform satisfactorily in class. These efforts, however, were not totally successful and at the end of the school year, we were dealing with the same problems. The barriers we encountered were in no way related to problems with Head Start--they were very helpful--but with communicating with the other agencies and getting results from them after they evaluated the child.

Parents were described as the barriers to transition by two principals.

"Parents frequently do not understand the modus operandi of a large public school system as opposed to a small private agency."

One principal described the differing views of Head Start and the schools in regard to child readiness for school.

"Head Start staff views student achievement and readiness differently than our school. We tested and screened all in-coming kindergarten students with the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and the Pre-School Language Scale. We found two Head Start students very low, they were two of 23 lowest out of approximately 235 screened. When I called the Head Start director to inquire about these two students I was told they were two of their brightest students. This year, 13 out of 23 headstart students went into special kindergarten programs. Seven went into an all day program and six went into a pre-kindergarten program because of low readiness skills."

Table 18

Incidents Cited by Principals
as Barriers to Transition
(N = 18)

Incident	Principals Reporting	
	N	%
Parents caused the transition problem	2	11
There were problems with communication or cooperation between Head Start and the schools	5	28
A particular child or children had problems adjusting to school	5	28
There were problems with other agencies in receiving services	3	17
Head Start and the schools have different attitudes about readiness	1	5
Incompatibility in schedules caused problems	1	5
Head Start children could not visit the school because of the large kindergarten enrollment	1	5

Also mentioned were incompatibility in schedules and difficulties in arranging for child visits because of the large number of children in kindergarten.

Summary

A majority of the principals reported participating in a variety of transition activities such as joint planning, providing information to Head Start and arranging for Head Start staff visits to the school. However few principals agreed with their correspondent Head Start director on their involvement in these activities.

Fewer principals reported receiving records on children than Head Start directors said were sent, with the exception of social service records. Records (when received) were usually put in the child's file and used to obtain services.

Of greatest concern to school staffs regarding transition was children's readiness for school.

Schools provided information to parents independent of Head Start efforts. Most principals reported providing information on school procedures, calendars, opportunities for parent involvement and supplementary school services. In addition, in the majority of schools someone spoke with some or most of the parents about their child during the first month of school.

While most principals did not identify problems with transition, those that did cited parents lacking skills for dealing with the elementary school, the lack of information about individual children, the lack of written

agreements and children lacking skills as problems. Similarly, critical incidents described most frequently as barriers to transition were ones in which communication problems occurred or in which a particular child had problems adjusting to school. Effective incidents were activities designed for children such as school visits and Head Start/school staff activities.

School Teachers' Reports on Transition

A randomly selected kindergarten or first grade teacher in each school was asked to describe his/her transition efforts. Eighty teachers responded. The number of children in their classes ranged from 14 to 60 with a mean of 32. Ninety-five percent taught kindergarten, four percent taught first grade and one taught both. The number of Head Start children in their classes ranged from two to 40 with a mean of nine.

Transition Activities

School teachers were asked about the transition activities in which they had participated. The majority reported that they had not participated in such activities as joint planning with Head Start, meeting with other school staff to discuss ways to facilitate transition, meeting with Head Start staff, or receiving information from Head Start school staff about the purpose of Head Start, its classroom methods or ways Head Start children were prepared for elementary school (Table 19). On the other hand, slightly more than half reported that they had provided information to Head Start about the school and had received the names of the Head Start children who would be entering school.

Table 19

Teachers' Participation in
Transition Activities
(N = 79)

Activity	Number of Teachers Who Participated	
	Yes	No
	%	%
Participated in joint planning with Head Start staff about transition procedures or transfer of records of individual children.	33	67
Met with other school staff to discuss ways to facilitate the transition.	29	71
Provided information to Head Start about the school.	52	48
Met with Head Start staff.	41	60
Received information from Head Start or school staff about the purpose of Head Start, its classroom methods or ways Head Start children were prepared for elementary school.	44	56
Received the names of the Head Start children who would be entering school.	63	37

Transfer of Records

The teachers were asked what records they had received from Head Start and the uses they made of those records.

As Table 20 shows, the majority of teachers did not receive records for developmental screenings, developmental tests, social services, Individual Education Plans or Certification of Handicapping Condition on any children. The majority did receive medical records on the children, however. A sizable minority received all types of records on all the children, showing that from 21 to 47% of the Head Start programs surveyed are sending a variety of records to the school and they are being passed along to the teachers.

Teachers were also asked how they used the records they received. Four categories of uses were available and teachers could indicate that they used any, all, or none of them. Because from 38 to 68% of the teachers reported that they received no records of the various types, the number reporting uses were quite small.

Forty-eight percent of the teachers reported that they received speech, hearing, or vision tests. The most frequent use of these was to obtain services or evaluations for the child (67%) followed by their use to assist the child in class (58%), and to modify classroom activities (31%). The next largest number of teachers (45) used medical records to obtain services (56%) and to assist the child in class (29%). Developmental screenings were received by 34 teachers and used most to assist the child in class (59%), place the child in a classroom (44%), to obtain services (41%), in talks with parents (32%), and to modify classroom activities (26%). Developmental tests were received by 32 teachers and used much the same way. Social service records

Table 20

Records Received by School Teachers
from Head Start

Type of Information	Percentage of Children For Which Records Were Provided: All 100% %	Most 50-90% %	Some 1-49% %	None %
Developmental Screenings (N = 75)	33	5	7	55
Speech, Vision and Hearing Test (N = 78)	40	6	15	39
Developmental Tests (N = 74)	30	8	5	57
Medical Records (N = 76)	47	5	7	41
Social Services Records (N - 76)	21	5	8	66
Individual Education Plan (N = 63)	27	5	3	65
Certification of Handicapping Condition (N = 60)	25	7		69
Overall rate of records received	32	6	7	55

Table 21

Teachers' Use of
Transferred Records

Type of Information	To Place Child in Classroom %	To Modify Classroom Activities %	To Assist Child in Class %	To Obtain Services or Evaluations for Child %	In Talks With Parents %	Did Not Use %
Developmental Screenings N = 34	44	26	59	41	32	12
Speech, Vision and Hearing Tests N = 48	19	31	58	67	19	10
Developmental Tests N = 32	38	38	53	34	28	13
Medical Records N = 45	4	16	29	56	24	13
Social Service Records N = 26	8	8	35	46	38	23
Individual Education Plan N = 22	41	59	64	68	50	9
Certification of Handicapping Condition N = 19	47	53	47	74	47	16

were received by 26 teachers and used most frequently to obtain services for the child (46%), in talks with parents (38%), and to assist the child in class, although 23%--more than any other record--did not use them if they received them. Only 22 teachers received individual education plans, perhaps because many had no handicapped children in their classes. Of these, 64% used them to assist the child in class, 59% to modify classroom activities, and 50% in talks with parents. The certification of handicapping condition was received by fewer teachers (19) but was used in the same ways as the IEP.

The teachers were asked if the information that Head Start provided was helpful. Eighty-one percent reported that it was helpful with only 19% reporting that it was not. Only 17% reported giving any feedback to Head Start about the information that was provided.

Although fewer than half of the teachers received records, those that did receive them apparently used them well.

Teachers were asked about the concerns they had regarding the Head Start children before they began school. As Table 22 shows, the most teachers were concerned about the children's readiness for the academically oriented demands of elementary school, with 42% stating their concern. Fewer (17%) were concerned that they could not speak the same language as the children or that they would not be able to work with Head Start (7%).

One issue of concern was whether teachers met with parents early in the school year. This is the type of attention parents are used to receiving in Head Start and a series of questions was designed to determine if such efforts were continued in school. Teachers were asked with what percentage of the

Table 22

Teachers' Concerns
About Transition
(N = 78)

Concern	Concerned		Not Concerned	
	N	%	N	%
Children would be ready for the academically oriented demands in elementary school	33	42	45	58
Teacher could speak the primary language of the Head Start parents or children	13	17	65	83
Teacher could work with Head Start staff	5	7	69	93

Table 23

Percent of Teachers Who Talked With
Parents About Child By Percentage of Parents
(N = 76)

Teacher Talked With Parents About	Percent of Teachers by Percent of Parents Talked To: All 100% %	Most 50-90% %	Some 1-49% %	None %
Their child's strengths	21	26	34	18
Their child's developmental level	18	24	38	20
Their child's physical/ mental/emotional limitations or special needs	12	24	34	30
Ways for parents to make their concerns about their children known to staff	28	21	28	24
Average Percent of Talking With Parents	20	24	34	23

parents they talked about a series of child-related items such as their children's strength and needs (Table 23).

Clearly in many places it was not customary to discuss such issues with all parents during the first month of school, although the majority of teachers discussed child strengths, developmental level, need for screening, limitations, and ways to make their concerns known with at least some parents. However, 32% said they discussed all of these items with less than 50% of the parents and 22% said they had no discussion with parents.

Comparison of Head Start Children With Low Income Peers

Teachers were asked to compare Head Start children in their classrooms to their low-income peers who did not attend Head Start. Teachers rated Head Start children equally or better prepared in six skill areas. As Table 24 shows, Head Start children were rated as equal to or better prepared by an average of 92% of the teachers in the six skill areas: following directions, completing tasks, interacting appropriately with adults, interacting appropriately with other children, standing up for their rights and performing school work at the appropriate level.

In addition, teachers were asked if the Head Start children adjusted to school better than, about the same, or worse than their low-income peers during the first month of school. Again, a large number of the teachers (96%) said the Head Start children adjusted the same or better than the other children.

Teachers were asked for their perceptions of the three biggest problems in the transition process. As Table 25 shows, teachers agreed with principals on most of the problems, but with some exceptions.

Table 24

Comparison of Head Start Children to Low-Income Peers on Preparedness for School in Six Skill Areas
(N = 77)

	Teachers Ratings on Children		
	Less/Much Less Prepared	Equally Prepared	More/Much More Prepared
	%	%	%
Following Directions	9	29	62
Completing Tasks	8	30	62
Interacting Appropriately With Adults	8	26	66
Interacting Appropriately With Children	4	26	70
Standing Up For Their Rights	5	42	53
Performing School Work at the Appropriate Level	12	27	61
Average School Preparedness	8	30	63
Average School Preparedness Equally or Better Prepared		93%	

Table 25

Teachers' Determination of Three Biggest Problems in Transition[1] (N = 65)

Problem	No. of Teachers Identifying Problem: Problem Ranked 1st, 2nd or 3rd	
	N	%
Parents lack skills for dealing with elementary school environment	38	23
Information about individual children is absent or inadequate	35	21
Children lack skills for dealing with elementary school personnel or environment	27	16
Too many children are involved	16	10
There is no written agreement with Head Start	14	9
There is little cooperation from the school board, school superintendent, or other teachers	12	7
There is a lack of trust between Head Start and the school system	5	3
Communication between Head Start and the school system is inadequate	4	2

[1]Each teacher could provide three responses

Teachers considered parents lacking the skills for dealing with the elementary school personnel or environment as both the single biggest problem and the most frequently noted problem ranked first, second, or third. Their next greatest concern was that information regarding individual children was absent or inadequate reflecting the earlier finding that records and information did not appear to be reaching the teachers. Teachers also felt that the children lacked the skills needed to deal with elementary school, despite their ratings of them as better prepared than other low-income children. Teachers also felt that too many children were involved, that there was no written agreement with Head Start, that there was little cooperation from the school board, the school superintendent or other teachers, that there is a lack of trust between Head Start and the school system and that communication between Head Start and the schools is inadequate.

Summary

Teachers were less likely than principals to have participated in transition activities, although slightly more than half reported that they had provided information to Head Start about the school and had received the names of the children who would be entering school.

Most teachers did not receive records on the children, indicating that if they reached the principals they were rarely passed on to the teachers. When they did receive records, teachers usually used them to obtain services or to assist the child in class.

Of greatest concern to teachers was the children's academic readiness for school.

Teachers were slightly more likely to report that they did not talk to parents about their children during the first month of school than principals said they did.

Over 90% of the teachers rated Head Start children equally or better prepared for school than their low-income peers on a variety of behaviors. Teachers also thought Head Start children adjusted to school the same or better than their peers.

As were principals, teachers were concerned that parents did not have the skills for dealing with elementary school personnel and that information regarding individual children was absent or inadequate. They also cited the children's lack of skills needed for school as problematic, apparently comparing them to middle class children as they rated them better prepared than other low income children.

Parents' Reports on Transition

For each Head Start program and school surveyed, two parents were selected. These were parents of former Head Start children who were currently in their first year of school in the selected teacher's class. Of these 288 parents, 185 responded. The majority of the parents had a child aged six who had been in Head Start for one year. Thirty-eight percent of the children had attended for two years. The majority (65%) had at least one older sibling and 62% had at least one sibling who had attended Head Start.

Preparation for School

There are a variety of possible activities to help prepare parents for the transition of their children from Head Start to school. Table 26 shows the

Table 26

Transition Activities for
Parents Conducted
Before School Entry
(N = 185)

	Yes	No	Don't Know
	%	%	%
Head Start told parent how school would differ from Head Start	66	29	5
Head Start had a meeting or home visit for parents about children starting school	86	10	4
Parent attended meeting or participated in home visit	95	5	0
School or teacher had a meeting for parents	76	22	3
Parent attended meeting	92	8	0
Head Start arranged for parents to visit child's new school	50	41	9
Parent attended school visit	46	54	0
Parent given consent form to sign to transfer records	75	12	14
Head Start gave parents list of books about school to read to child	36	54	10
(If list given) Parent read books to child	94	6	0
Parent talked to child about ways school would differ from Head Start	94	6	0

percentage of parents who had the opportunity and participated in such activities. As can be seen, most parents reported that the Head Start programs provided these opportunities for them. Eighty-six percent of the parents reported that Head Start held a meeting or conducted a home visit for them about their children starting school. Of these parents, 95% attended the meeting or participated in the home visit. Somewhat surprisingly only 66% of the parents reported that Head Start told the parent how school would differ from Head Start. It would seem that all Head Start programs would convey this information, but especially those that had a meeting or home visit about school.

In contrast, only 76% of the parents reported that the schools had a meeting for parents. Of those parents, 92% said that they attended the meeting.

It would be expected that with transition as a major initiative, all Head Start programs would be undertaking a variety of fairly concrete transition activities such as arranging for parents to visit the child's new school, having parents sign consent forms, and giving parents lists of books about school to read to the child. While many parents reported that their Head Start programs did these things, many reported that they did not. Only 50% of the parents said that Head Start arranged for them to visit the child's new school. Of the parents for whom visits were arranged, all but six attended the visits. Seventy-five percent of the parents said they were given a consent form to sign to transfer records, although as this is a Head Start Performance Standard, it seems rather low. Only 36% of the parents reported that Head Start gave them a list of books about school to read to their child. If

Table 27

Parental Agreement
with Statements
Evaluating Head Start's
Preparation for Transition
(N = 185)

Statement	Agree %	Disagree %
Head Start taught me ways to help my child get along in school	96	4
The information about school came from Head Start too late	9	91
Head Start told me most of what I wanted or needed to know about school	84	16
Heat Start had too much written material and not enough talking	10	90
I felt ready to deal with the new school	95	5

they received the list, 94% of the parents read the books to the child. Ninety-four percent of the parents said that they talked to their child about ways school would differ from Head Start.

Parents were asked to evaluate their Head Start's performance in preparing them for the child's transition by agreeing or disagreeing with a series of statements. Three of the statements were worded positively and two negatively. Generally parents gave Head Start high marks for their preparatory work. As Table 27 shows, only on the item "Head Start told me most of what I wanted or needed to know about school" did more than 15% of the parents disagree with the statement.

In addition to responding to prepared statements about Head Start's preparation of them for school, 32 parents provided their own thoughts in response to the question "What else do you think Head Start could have done to prepare you for your child's new school? (Table 28) (Thirty-five responses were received from 32 parents.)

Ten parents felt that Head Start should provide more information such as on the importance of attending school orientation, providing a list of services schools offer, information on what the child will be taught in school, and "how hard it is to get a straight answer" from the schools.

Ten parents felt that Head Start should teach more things, generally more academic skills (numbers, handwriting, ABC's) as well as behavioral skills (to be more independent, to behave in school). Eight parents wanted visits to the school for parents and children or a similar orientation for children. Six parents wanted meetings for parents and children with the kindergarten teacher at Head Start. Finally, one parent wanted more flexibility in Head Start's programming so that the child could stay in Head Start an additional year.

Table 28

Parents' Suggestions For
Additional Things Head Start
Could Do To Prepare For Transition
(N = 35)

	Parents Responding	
	N	%
Provide More Information to Parents	10	29
Teach children additional things/learn what children need to know in school	10	29
Provide visits to the schools for parent or children	8	23
Have meetings with the kindergarten teachers	6	17
Allow children to stay in Head Start longer	1	3

Table 29

Parental Concerns
About Child Starting School
(N = 185)

Concern	Parent has concern	
	Yes	No
	%	%
Teacher would not understand child's needs	48	52
How child would behave	42	58
Teacher would not spend enough time with child	29	71
Child would not be able to do the school work	28	72
Parent would not be able to communicate with teacher easily	27	74

These concerns, although from a minority of parents, reflect both general transition concerns (for meetings, visits, information) but also the tension between the developmental curriculum of Head Start and the academic demands of the school and Head Start's response to those demands.

Parental Concerns

Parents were asked about their concerns for their children just before they started school. These were fairly normal concerns that almost any parent might have with a child starting school. As Table 29 shows the most parents (48%) were concerned that the teacher would not understand their child's needs. A slightly smaller number (42%) were concerned about how the child would behave in school. For the other concerns a fairly consistent percentage (26-29%) were concerned about the parents own ability to communicate with the teacher easily (27%), the child's ability to do the school work (28%) and that the teacher would not spend enough time with the child (29%).

Child Behavioral Problems

Stress from transition often manifests itself in children's behavior. Parents were asked about a variety of physical or emotional problems their children might have experienced during the first month of school. Generally a very small percentage of children were reported as experiencing these problems.

The most frequently reported symptom (23%) was that the child wanted more attention than usual (Table 30). Eleven percent of the parents reported that their children wanted to stay home from school, and nine percent reported that their children cried more than usual, got sick or had more trouble sleeping than usual. Almost no children had more bad dreams or wet their beds more than usual.

Table 30

Child Problems During
First Month of School
(N = 184)

Problem	Experienced By Child			
	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Wanted more attention than usual	42	23	142	77
Wanted to stay home from school	20	11	164	89
Cry more than usual	17	9	167	91
Get sick, have stomach aches, headaches or colds more than usual	16	9	168	91
Have more trouble sleeping than usual	16	9	168	91
Have more bad dreams than usual	3	2	181	98
Wet the bed more than usual	2	1	182	99
Average Percent of Problems		9		

Other measures of the child's adjustment to school were three scales on which the parents rated the children on their self-confidence, liking of Head Start and school, and happiness at three points in time. The three time points were the preceding spring during Head Start, the first month of school in the fall and at the time of the survey the following spring.

All three scales reflected the same pattern. On the self confidence scale 79% of the children were rated as "pretty" or "extremely" self confident in Head Start in the spring of 1986, dropping to 62% in the first month of school in the fall and increasing again to 91% in the spring of 1987. On liking of school, 97% liked Head Start "a little" or "a lot" in the spring. Ninety-two percent liked school a little or a lot in the fall and 95% liked school a little or a lot in the spring. Ninety-seven percent of the children were "fairly" or "very happy" in the spring of 1986. Eighty-nine percent were fairly or very happy in the fall and 94% were fairly or very happy in the spring of 1987 (Table 31).

The greatest variation was seen for the two top categories in self confidence with a high rating in Head Start dropping in the fall, but rising above Head Start levels in the spring. There was less variation on liking of school and happiness with a slight dip on both in the fall but almost regaining the Head Start level in the spring (Figure 1). However for the highest category only there was a greater variation on liking school and happy. Liking school a lot dropped by 18 percentage points from Head Start to the fall and very happy dropped 23 points. In contrast extremely self confident dropped only 8 points.

Table 31

Child Self-Confidence, Liking of School, and Happiness at Three Time Points

Self Confidence	Child Rating in Spring (1986) in Head Start	Child Rating in fall, 1986 first month of school	Child Rating in spring 1987 in school
(N = 184)	%	%	%
Not Very Self Confident	1	1	1
Not At All Self Confident	3	9	1
Somewhat Self Confident	18	29	7
Pretty Self Confident	52	43	42
Extremely Self Confident	27	19	49
Liking School			
(N = 185)			
Dislike a Lot	1		2
Dislike a Little	2	4	2
Doesn't Like or Dislike	1	4	2
Likes a Little	5	18	13
Likes a Lot	92	74	82
Happy			
(N = 185)			
Very Sad	1	1	1
Somewhat Sad	1	1	3
Not Happy or Sad	2	9	2
Fairly Happy	20	35	23
Very Happy	77	54	71

Figure 1

Child Self-Confidence, Liking of School and Happiness at Three Time Points

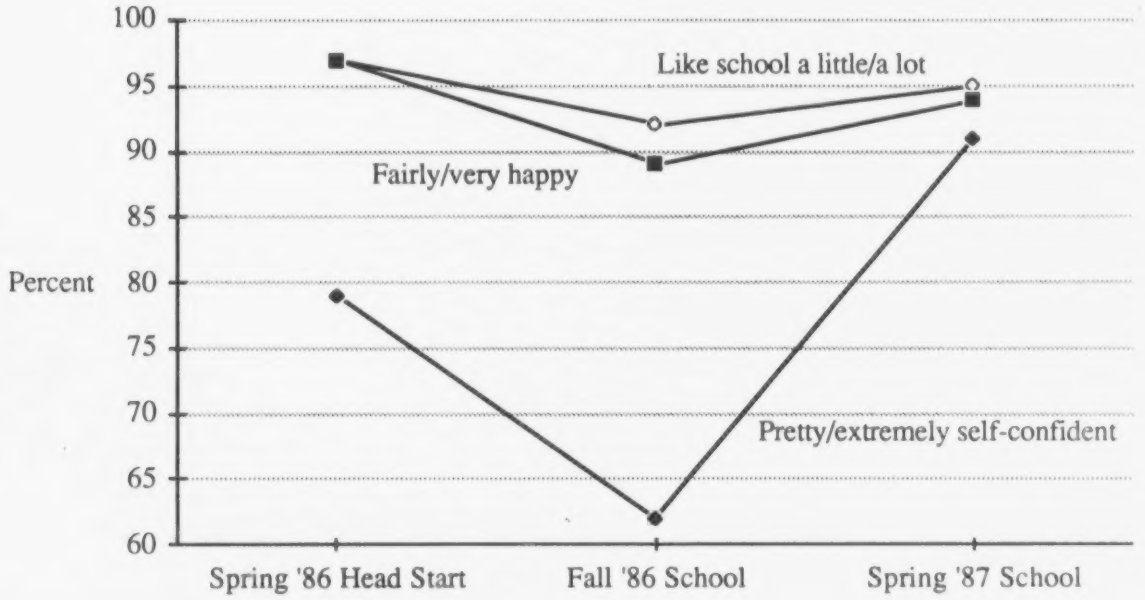
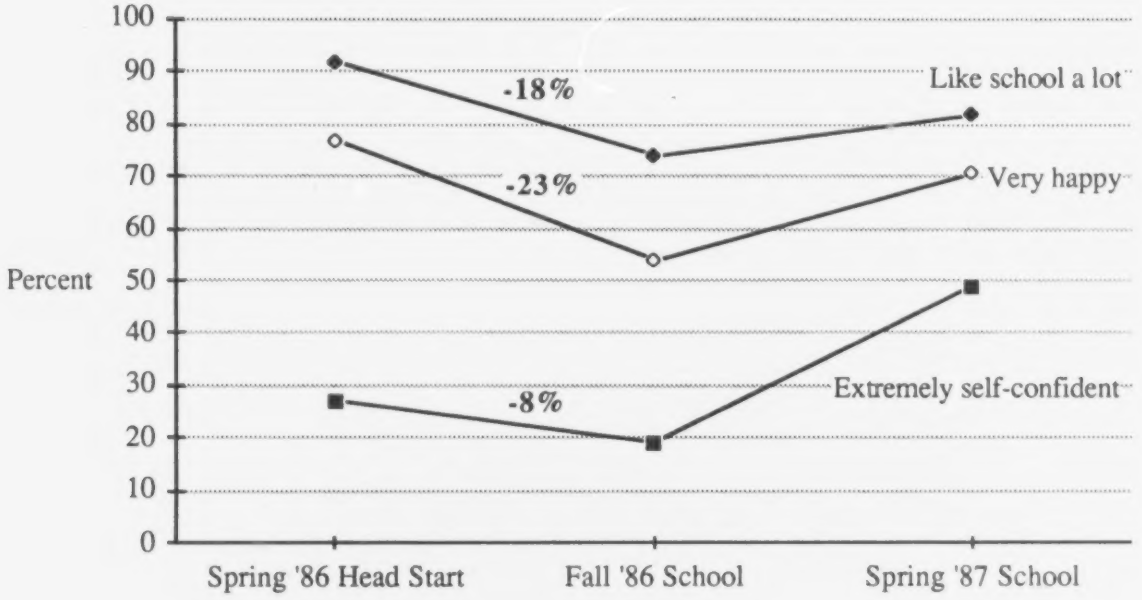


Figure 2

Child Self-Confidence, Liking of School and Happiness at Three Time Points for Children Rated Highest



Evidently the first month of school is stressful and has a depressing effect on these measures of child well-being, especially self-confidence for almost 20% of the Head Start children. Without a control group it was not possible to assess the effect of Head Start on reducing transition stress or on promoting resiliency the following spring.

According to their reports, these Head Start parents appeared to be fairly active in visiting the school and talking with the teacher. They visited their children's schools an average of 6 times during the year and talked with the teacher an average of 6.25 times. However, they attended PTA meetings only an average of 1.49 times. All but one of the 185 parents knew the names of their child's teacher.

Their low rates of attending PTA meetings may be the best indicator of their degree of involvement with the school. They seemed to have few concerns about their child's transition, and to rate Head Start highly on preparing them for transition. They report that their children had few transition problems. While it was hypothesized that relationships might be found between the number of transition activities and the well-being scales, none were found.

This somewhat benign picture that the parents paint of themselves and their children may mean that there actually are few problems, or it may mean that the parents are not closely involved with the school and not dealing with its demands. The somewhat uninvolved behavior is more consistent with the concerns stated by Head Start and school staff that parents do not have the skills to deal with the elementary school.

Summary

A large proportion of the parents surveyed reported activity on transition by their Head Start programs. Over two-thirds of the parents reported that Head Start held a meeting or home visit about school and told the parents how school would differ from Head Start. Almost all the parents who said meetings were held attended the meeting. Fewer (76%) reported that the schools held such meetings. Only half of the parents reported having the opportunity to visit the school, but when they did almost all parents took advantage of the opportunity.

Only three-fourths of the parents were given record transfer consent forms to sign even though this is a Performance Standards requirement for all Head Starts. Just over a third reported that Head Start gave them a list of books to read to their children.

Generally parents rated Head Start very highly on preparation for transition but some parents wanted more information, wanted their children to be taught more things, and to have more visits or meetings with the school.

Most parents did not express concerns about their child's entry into school although nearly half were concerned that the teacher would not understand their child's needs or that the child would not behave well in school.

Parents reported few behavioral symptoms of stress at the time of transition. The only symptom reported by a sizeable group (23%) was that the child wanted more attention than usual. On other measures of child adjustment to school (self-confidence, liking of school, and happiness) parents ranked the children very high on all three dimensions in the spring during Head Start. The ratings dropped somewhat in the fall but rose again in the spring. The

greatest change was seen in self-confidence with the children considered pretty or extremely self-confident dropping to the 62 percentile in the fall but rising to 91% in the spring, even higher than they had been in Head Start.

Parents were fairly active in visiting their children's schools, visiting and talking with the teacher, but they attended PTA meetings less than twice a year.

Additional Analyses

Additional analyses were conducted to determine if increased transition efforts related to improved parent or child outcomes, or if different types of Head Start programs had varying success with transition.

A few interesting relationships with important policy implications were found.

Relationship of Head Start Auspice to Transition Activities

As might be expected, Head Start programs that were operated by school systems were more likely to have undertaken some transition activities than Head Start programs operated by other organizations. School operated programs were significantly more likely than others to have written agreements, to have given the names of the children to the school, to have provided developmental screening, and speech, vision or hearing test results, IEP's and handicapped certification to the schools. School operated Head Starts were also more likely to involve staff in preparations to transfer records. However, school-operated Head Starts were not more likely than other agency operated Head Starts to participate in joint planning, to meet with the superintendent,

to provide the schools with information on the purpose of Head Start, to provide developmental test results or social service records, or to train staff for preparing the children for transition.

Principal's Involvement in Transition

The principals were asked about several concerns that school staff might have had before the Head Start children began school such as the children's ability to do the school work, working with the parents and Head Start staff etc. There was a significant relationship between the proportion of Head Start children in the school with the number of concerns the school staff had.

$$r = .29,\ p < .01$$

Thus the more Head Start children there were in relation to all the children in the school, the more concerns the school staff had about them. This is probably due to the greater awareness of Head Start and other low income children when there are more of them in a school, and thus a general heightening of involvement with them.

This general involvement with Head Start was also seen in positive relationships among various types of transition efforts. The more transition activities school staff performed (such as joint planning, arranging for visits etc) the more school staff talked with all, most or some of the parents about their children during the first month of school.

$$r = .29,\ p < .01$$

If the principal reported that the school had received information on Head Start, child names, and child records, school staff were also more likely to talk with parents the first month of school.

$$r = .29,\ p < .01$$

The more transition activities the school had conducted with Head Start, the more information the school provided to parents (such as bus schedules, school policies etc.) and the more staff had talked with parents in the first month of school.

$$r = .29,\ p < .01$$

Essentially these findings indicate a related general level of interest and activity in Head Start, transition and parents. If schools are participating in transition activities and receiving information from Head Start programs, they are also working with Head Start parents - providing them with information and talking with them. These findings indicate a general high level of interest and activity in regard to Head Start children, parents and transition among the schools that scored well on these factors.

A regression analysis examined the variables of school personnel talking to parents, transition activities and staff concerns. The extent of talking to parents during the first month of school was the dependent variable. The number of transition activities conducted by the school, the concerns about transition and the proportion of the Head Start children in school contributed to the explanation of 16 percent of the variance.

$$R^2 = .16,\ p < .01$$

Examination of the semi-partial correlations shows that the number of transition activities and the number of concerns are more important contributors than the proportion of Head Start children. This indicates that efforts to have the school be more responsive to parents are more affected by increasing transition activities and concerns about the children than by the proportion of children who come from Head Start.

Turning to the parents and teachers, correlational analyses revealed that the more transitional activities teachers participated in and the more information they received from Head Start on individual children, the more they talked with parents during the first month of school.

$$r = .37,\ p < .01$$

In addition the more activities they participated in the higher they rated Head Start children on a series of skills.

$$r = .29,\ p < .01$$

Also, the more they talked with parents, the higher they rated the children

$$r = .20,\ p < .10$$

This finding may again illustrate a general level of involvement with Head Start: more activities, more involvement with families and better rating of children. It might also work the other way, with teachers who perceive Head Starters as performing well in school, being more willing to meet with parents and work with Head Start. Whatever the reason, when teachers are involved with Head Start it is more likely that teachers will talk with parents and rate children higher on school preparedness.

Schools were divided by quartiles based on cumulative scores on teachers responses on transition activities in which they participated and records received for all or most children. The highest and lowest scoring quartile schools were compared on the teachers' rating of the children, extent to which parents felt Head Start had prepared them for transition, child problems and parent ratings of child self-confidence, happiness and liking of school. There were some non-significant tendencies for the lower scoring teachers to rate Head Start children lower on the six skill areas, reflecting the same findings as the correlations above, i.e. teachers more involved in transition rated children higher.

The impact of transition activities on child stress was examined by comparing children in classes where teachers participated in no or one transition activity (low group) versus those that participated in nine or more activities (high group). As reported by their parents, children in the classes of the high group teachers had fewer problems during the first month of school (such as wanting more attention or having bad dreams) than did children in the low group teachers' classes. Children in the high activity group had a mean of .50 problems compared to .92 problems for children in the low activity group. This difference was significant at the .08 level.

A second analysis compared children who had no problems, grouping them by the same low and high teacher activity levels. Children whose teachers participated in more activities were more likely to have no problems during the first month of school. This finding was significant at the .05 level.

There are several possible explanations for this finding. The most apparent explanation is that when teachers participate in more transition activities, they are more successful at easing the transition to school and children have fewer problems adjusting. It may also be that better teachers are more likely to participate in such activities and they are also more effective at easing child transition. It may be that teachers who participate in more transition activities expect the children involved to be better prepared for transition. Because of these higher expectations, through the "Pygmalion effect," the children do have fewer problems. Finally, it may be that the better Head Start programs both prepared children better for school and conducted more transition activities oriented to teachers as well.

A few relationships were also found for parents. The more transition activities the parents participated in, the higher the Head Start children were

rated by teachers. These were not necessarily the children of these parents being rated although the children were in these teachers' classes. However the relationship does show a generally positive relationship between parental activity and child ratings.

The more transition activities the parents participated in, the higher they rated Head Start in preparing them for transition

$$r = .24,\ p < .01$$

In addition the more activities they participated in, the higher they rated their children in the spring during Head Start and in school at the time of the survey on the self-confidence, liking school and happiness scales.

$r = .15$ Spring, Head Start $p < .05$

$r = .14$ Spring, school $p < .05$

It is possible that parent involvement in transition can help children be more self-confident, like school more and be happier.

Comparison of Data from Survey Respondents and Transition Grantees

As described in the Introduction, 144 Head Start programs, their corresponding schools and parents were surveyed and 15 transition grantee Head Start programs were studied in depth.

Many of the same questions were asked of both survey and grantee respondents to determine if activities, attitudes and concerns differed if a special transition program was in place. Such a comparison assists in the evaluation of the various transition efforts. Overall differences were found, with the grantees conducting more activities than the non-grantees in the survey. It is important to note in the following analyses that the small number of grantees makes large percentage differences possible with a small numerical difference in the number of programs conducting an activity.

As Table 32 shows, Head Start grantee directors reported many more joint activities with the schools. Grantees were four and a half times as likely to have developed written agreements as were survey respondents. Higher percentages of grantees than survey respondents provided the elementary school with information about the purpose of Head Start, participated in joint planning, provided the schools with the names of the Head Start children, and met with the school superintendent.

Grantees were somewhat more likely to provide screening and test results to the schools than were survey respondents. The difference was usually 7 to 15% in favor of the grantees although only 4% more grantees than survey respondents provided social service records (Table 33).

Staff concerns about transition of the children into school were almost identical between the two groups of respondents (see Table 34).

Table 32

Comparison of Survey and Grantee
Transition Activities As Reported By
Head Start Directors

Activity	Survey Programs that Conducted Activity N = 104 %	Grantees that Conducted Activity N = 13 %
Provided the elementary school with information about the purpose of Head Start, classroom methods, or ways that children were prepared for school.	76	92
Participated in joint planning with school staff about transition procedures or transfer of records of individual children.	74	92
Names of Head Start children who would be entering elementary school.	70	85
Met with the school superintendent, assistant superintendent or some one from his/her office.	60	85
Developed a written agreement with the elementary school district or a specific school.	13	58

Table 33

Head Start
Comparison of Directors' Reports on
Programs Information Provided to Schools By
Percentage of Children For
Which Item Is Provided

Concern	Percentage of Programs Providing Information for At Least Some Children	
	Survey Programs	Grantees
	N = 108	N = 13
	%	%
Results of developmental screenings	78	85
Results of speech, vision or hearing tests	93	100
Results of developmental tests	78	85
Social services records	42	46
Individual Education Plans for Handicapped Children	84	100
Certification of the handicapping condition	85	100

Table 34

Comparison of Survey and Grantee Directors Reports of Staff Concerns About Transition of Children Into School

Type of Concern	Percentage of Directors Expressing Concern	
	Survey Programs	Grantees
	N = 108	N = 13
	%	%
School staff might not encourage parents to become involved in school activities or decision-making groups	81	85
Children might not be ready for academic demands of school	73	85
School staff might not work with Head Start parents in helping children adjust to school	70	67
Information on individual children might not be used appropriately by the schools	48	54
School teachers will not speak the primary language of the children or parents	35	31

Table 35

Comparison of Transition
Activities For Parents
Provided By Survey Programs and Grantees

Type of Activity	Percentage of Programs Providing Activity	
	Survey Programs	Grantees
	N = 108	N = 13
	%	%
Information on how parents can help their children practice skills needed for elementary school	90	100
Suggestions for summer activities or a list of books parents can read to their children	86	100
Helping Head Start parents understand what to look for and what to do about their child's feelings and reactions to being in elementary school	78	100
Provided parents with information for parents on how to deal with the school their child will be entering	72	100

One hundred percent of the transition grantees provided the parent transition activities about which questions were asked, while 72 to 90% of the survey programs conducted them (Table 35). These included such things as providing parents with information on how to help prepare children for school, suggestions for summer activities, helping parents understand their children's feelings about school and providing them with information on how to deal with the school. All of these were the kinds of things transition grantees were expected to do. Grantees were also more likely to conduct transition activities for children, especially school visits and meeting the new teacher.

The problems encountered in transition were fairly similar for the grantees and the survey respondents. However only 9% of the grantees found the lack of written agreements problematic compared to 39% of the surveyed programs (Grantees had proportionately more written agreements). Grantees (45%) were more likely to consider a lack of trust between Head Start and the schools to be a problem than were survey respondents (18%) (Table 37).

Grantee principals were much more frequently involved in transition activities than were survey principals including such activities as joint planning, providing information to Head Start, arranging for Head Start staff to visit the school, and receiving names of children from Head Start.

Grantee principals were much more likely to identify problems in transition than were survey respondents. Grantee principals more frequently identified as problems parents lacking skills for dealing with elementary school personnel and children lacking skills for dealing with elementary school. (Table 39)

Table 36

Comparison of Activities To
Prepare Children For
Transition
By Survey Programs and Grantees

Type of Activity	Percentage of Programs Providing Activity	
	Survey Programs	Grantees
	N = 108	N = 13
	%	%
Head Start staff talk with children about ways elementary school will differ from Head Start	90	100
Head Start arranges for children to:		
visit school	60	100
meet new teacher	43	92

Table 37

Comparison of Problems
Survey and Grantee Programs Encountered
in Transition

Problem	Percentage of Programs Ranking Problem 1st, 2nd, or 3rd	
	Survey Programs	Grantees
	N = 87	N = 14
	%	%
Too many different elementary schools are involved	57	45
Parents lack skills for dealing with the elementary school personnel or environment or fear distrust or do not feel welcome in schools	55	45
There is no written agreement with the school system	39	9
There is little cooperation from the school board or school staff	33	27
Too many children are involved	21	18
Lack of trust between Head Start and the school system	18	45
Children lack skills for dealing with the elementary school personnel or environment	11	18
School programs are inappropriately academic	8	-
Schools don't use information that is sent	7	-

Table 38

Comparison of Survey and Grantee
Principals' Participation
in Transition Activities

Activity	Percentage of Survey and Grantee Principals Reporting Participation	
	Survey Programs	Grantees
	N = 82	N = 8
	%	%
Participated in joint planning with Head Start staff about transition procedures or transfer of records of individual children	52	100
School staff met among themselves to discuss ways to facilitate the transition	48	87
Provided information to Head Start about the school (e.g., contact persons and phone numbers, registration procedures, school calendar)	77	100
Arranged for Head Start staff to visit the school	28	40
Developed written transition agreement with Head Start	61	100
Received information about the purpose of Head Start, its classroom methods, or ways that Head Start children were prepared for elementary school	50	61
Received names of the Head Start children who would be entering elementary school	75	100

Table 39

Comparison of Problems Identified by
Principals as First, Second or
Third Biggest Problem
By Survey Programs and Grantees

Problem	Survey Programs N = 74 %	Grantees N = 8 %
Parents lack skills for dealing with elementary school personnel or environment	14	47
Information about individual children is absent or inadequate	10	13
There is no written agreement with Head Start	8	13
Children lack skills for dealing with the elementary school environment	8	20
Too many children are involved	3	
Schools want information that Head Start does not have	3	
No problem listed	50	
There are communication problems between the schools and Head Start	2	
There are curriculum differences between the two programs	1	
There is not enough time for coordination	1	7

Table 40

Comparison of Survey and Grantee
Teachers' Participation in
Transition Activities

Activity	Percentage of Teachers Reporting They Participated in Activity	
	Survey Programs	Grantees
	N = 79	N = 10
	%	%
Participated in joint planning with Head Start staff about transition procedures or transfer of records of individual children.	33	80
Met with other school staff to discuss ways to facilitate the transition.	29	50
Provided information to Head Start about the school.	52	80
Met with Head Start staff.	41	80
Received information from Head Start or school staff about the purpose of Head Start, its classroom methods or ways Head Start children were prepared for elementary school.	44	66
Received the names of the Head Start children who would be entering school.	63	89

Table 41

Comparison of
Records Received by School Teachers
from Head Start
by Survey Programs and Grantees

Type of Information	Comparison of Records Received for At Least Some Children	
	Survey Programs	Grantees
	N = 76	N = 9
	%	%
Developmental Screenings	45	66
Speech, Vision and Hearing Test	61	78
Developmental Tests	43	56
Medical Records	59	67
Social Services Records	34	56
Individual Education Plan	35	45
Certification of Handicapping Condition	31	56

Table 42

Comparison of
Percent of Parents With Whom
Teacher Talked About Child

Teacher Talked With Parents About	Percent of Teachers Who Spoke With at Least Some Parents in First Month of School	
	Survey Programs	Grantees
	N = 76	N = 10
	%	%
Their child's strengths	82	100
Their child's developmental level	80	90
Their child's physical/ mental/emotional limitations or special needs	70	90
Ways for parents to make their concerns about their children known to staff	76	89

Table 43

Comparison of Grantee and Survey Program
Head Start Children to
Low-Income Peers on Preparedness for
School in Six Skill Areas

Skill	Percentage of Teachers Who Rated Children Equally or Better Prepared	
	Survey Programs	Grantees
	N = 77	N = 10
	%	%
Following Directions	91	100
Completing Tasks	92	90
Interacting Appropriately With Adults	92	90
Interacting Appropriately With Children	96	80
Standing Up For Their Rights	95	80
Performing School Work at the Appropriate Level	88	80

As Table 40 shows, grantee school teachers were much more likely to be involved in transition activities than were survey teachers. They were more likely to participate in joint planning, to meet with other school and Head Start staff, and to receive information and names from Head Start. Grantee school teachers were also more likely to receive records on Head Start children than were survey teachers. More grantee school teachers talked with parents about their children during the first month of school. However more survey teachers rated children equal to or better prepared than their low-income peers on five of six skill areas. (Table 43)

Survey and grantee parents were quite similar in their participation in transition activities. (Table 44). Only 3% more grantee than survey parents reported that Head Start arranged for them to visit the child's new school. Seventeen percent more survey than grantee parents reported that they attended the school visit if it was held. Similar percentages of grantee and survey parents received consent forms, received book lists, read books about school to their children and talked to their children about how school would differ from Head Start.

Survey and grantee parents agreed in similar proportions that Head Start had prepared them for transition except that more grantee parents felt that the information about school from Head Start came too late. (Table 45). Parental concerns about their child starting school were also similar except that more survey parents feared that they would not be able to communicate with the teacher easily. As Table 47 shows both groups of parents rated their children similarly on self-confidence, liking of school and happiness at the three points in time with the exception that grantee parents rated their children lower on self confidence in the fall, than did the survey parents. Again, the

Table 44

Comparison of Survey Program and Grantee
Transition Activities for Parents
Conducted Before School Entry

Activities	Activity Conducted	
	Survey Programs	Grantees
	N = 185	N = 16
	%	%
Head Start arranged for parents to visit child's new school	50	53
Parent attended school visit	94	77
Parent given consent form to sign to transfer records	75	82
Head Start gave parents list of books about school to child	36	41
Parent read books to child	94	100
Parent talked to child about ways school would differ from Head Start	94	94

Table 45

Comparison of Survey and Grantee
Parental Agreement with Statements
Evaluating Head Start's Preparation for Transition

Statement	Percent Agreeing With Statement	
	Survey Programs	Grantees
	N = 185	N = 17
	%	%
Head Start taught me ways to help my child get along in school	96	94
The information about school came from Head Start too late	9	24
Head Start told me most of what I wanted or needed to know about school	84	76
Head Start had too much written material and not enough talking	10	19
I felt ready to deal with new school	95	100

Table 46

Comparison of Survey and Grantee
Parental Concerns About Child Starting School

Concern	Percentage of Parents Stating Concern	
	Survey Programs	Grantees
	N = 185	N = 17
	%	%
Teachers would not understand child's needs	48	53
How child would behave	42	35
Teacher would not spend enough time on child	29	35
Child would not be able to do the school work	28	24
Parent would not be able to communicate with teacher easily	27	6

Table 47

Comparison of Survey and Grantee Parent Ratings of Child Self-Confidence, Liking of School and Happiness at Three Time Points (Two Highest Categories Only)

	Percentage of Parents Rating Children					
	Child Rating in Spring (1986) in Head Start		Child Rating in Fall, First Month of School		Child Rating in Spring 1987 in School	
	Survey	Grantee	Survey	Grantee	Survey	Grantee
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Self Confidence						
Pretty Self Confident/ Extremely Self Confident	79	76	62	48	91	94
Liking School						
Likes a Little/ Likes a Lot	97	88	92	94	94	100
Happy						
Fairly Happy/ Very Happy	97	100	89	94	94	100

[1]Survey N = 184, Grantee N = 17

small number of respondents in the grantee study makes those percentages unstable.

It is important to remember that the grantee parents were, for the most part, a "pre-test" group, that is, they had not participated in the special transition activities so it would not be expected that their responses would differ greatly from the survey parents. However, it is possible that Head Start programs that had some transition activities prior to receiving grants would have been more likely to receive grants, thus even these "pre-test" parents might have been more likely to have had more transition enhancing opportunities.

In summary, Head Start programs with transition grants were more likely to conduct transition activities with schools than programs without grants. Grantees were more likely to transfer records and to involve school teachers and principals in transition activities. Grantee school teachers were more likely to talk with parents, although survey teachers rated the children higher.

Grantee and survey parents were quite similar in their participation in transition activities and concerns.

Conclusions

From the results of the transition grantee study and the survey, it is clear that Head Start programs are making concerted efforts to improve the transition of children to the public schools. The programs that have received special grants are most successful at this, but most programs are making efforts to smooth the way for children and families.

These two surveys have identified transition techniques and approaches that work well as well as barriers to transition. These are described below.

Transition Approaches That Work

- Written transition agreements between Head Start programs and schools clarify roles, responsibilities and commitments to transition
- Directives from top level school officials set a positive tone and commitment for transition throughout the system
- Cordial personal relationships between Head Start programs and schools (or being part of the same school system) facilitate transition
- Exchange meetings between Head Start and kindergarten teachers are effective in clarifying Head Start's goals and program and in informing Head Start teachers of academic and behavioral expectations for kindergarten children
- Transfer of child names and records to the school alerts the school to the enrollment of Head Start children and enables the school to begin or continue needed services when the children enter. Records are most effectively used when they reach the teacher.
- Transition programs that function throughout the year - training parents, preparing children, working with school staff, implementing a variety of activities - were more successful than one-shot efforts at the end of the year.
- Programs that provide a supportive network to former Head Start parents whose children are in school are valuable. A parent-to-parent buddy system or staff support helps parents feel secure in the new school environment.
- Training for parents in ways to deal with the school system, what to expect, and how to be assertive in obtaining services for their children (especially handicapped children) are helpful to parents. Both general topics and concrete information and activities are successful. Informing parents of records needed for registration

and of dates of registration as well as providing transportation to registration are helpful in enrolling children in a timely fashion. Special meetings and registration for Head Start parents conducted by schools are successful.

- Visits by kindergarten teachers or older children to the Head Start provide information to the children and dispell their fears about school.

- Visits for children to the kindergarten were a highlight of the transition process for the children. Visits are most successful when kindergarten teachers are enthusiastic about the visits, prepare activities for the children and welcome them warmly to the school.

- Summer book lists and activities calendars can help parents ease their child's transition to school as well as maintain readiness skills that might otherwise decline over the summer.

- Conducting many transition activities produces more awareness and involvement of the school with the Head Start families.

- Head Start staff can be effective advocates for their former children, especially handicapped children, when parents seek their help in obtaining services or reversing school decisions. Head Start staff can also assist school personnel in working with parents whose wishes may not be beneficial to the child.

Barriers To Transition

- The different educational approaches of Head Start and the public schools create problems for children. The child-oriented developmental approach of Head Start contrasts sharply to the structured, academic approach of the schools.

- The failure to transfer records for all Head Start children to the schools and the failure of principals to pass such records on to teachers subvert their potential value in serving the child.

- The inability of parents to deal successfully with the schools are detriments to successful transition.

- The inability of Head Start children to meet the academic demands of the school, even though they are considered better prepared than their low income peers - is a concern to Head Start and school staff alike.

- Hostile, competitive or patronizing attitudes of Head Start or school staff toward each other are detriments to the establishment of successful transition efforts.